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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

13 March 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Possible Soviet Courses of Action in and with
Respect to Cuba

A. Objectives

1. We believe that the main Soviet objectives with respect
to Cuba are:

a. To use the Soviet presence in the Western Hemisphere
to maintain or increase pressure upon the United States.

b. To maintain Communist control of Cuba, with or
without Castro.

c. To facilitate Communist takeover of other Latin
American countries.

2. Two related questions must be entering into Soviet
thinking. One is whether to stage a coup against Castro in order

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to replace him with someone more amenable to Soviet direction. The other is how to fit Cuba into Khrushchev's current effort to patch up the fissures in the Sino-Soviet Bloc and rebut the Chinese charge that he is soft on capitalism. Both these questions argue for the necessity for some new Soviet initiative, after a period of evaluating Soviet policy in the light of the Cuban crisis of October 1962. The announcement of the withdrawal of "several thousand" Soviet personnel from Cuba taken together with developments on the Cuban, Chinese, and American scenes, make it appear that the Soviets are getting ready for this new initiative.

3. In any case, not all the possible Soviet objectives are consistent with one another. The Soviets could hardly, for example, renew the Cuba crisis with the United States without gravely endangering the continuance of communism on the island, just as in the earlier crisis they sacrificed their objective of furthering communism throughout the continent at least temporarily by uniting all Latin America against them. It is reasonable to assume, then, that the Soviets will look for new ways to attain their ends: something unexpected, probably more subtle, which will present the US with less clear-cut alternatives than those which appeared in 1962.

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B. Possible Soviet Courses of Action

4. Confusion to American Policy, Politics, and Intelligence.

Whatever else they do, the Soviets probably see excellent opportunities for themselves in the American reactions to the crisis. It will not be difficult for them to keep the Cuban situation confused, so that (a) it will continue to be a bitter but uncertain US domestic issue right up to the presidential election of 1964, and (b) public debate will continue to reveal the workings and cripple the effectiveness of American intelligence. These have already been advantages to them from the missile crisis, and they would expect both effects to stultify American policy.

5. Even the Soviets must have been surprised at the way in which many Americans interpret their successful direct confrontation of the Soviets in Cuba, their first since the Berlin Airlift of 1948, as an American defeat. Debate over whether all the missiles were removed, whether Soviet weapons remaining in Cuba have an offensive purpose, whether the caves and warehouses bulge with new weapons, whether the councils of the government are divided between doves and hawks, whether the news is "managed," has probably led the Soviets to count on confusion and vacillation to hobble

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American policy, not only to prevent dangerous American initiative against them but also to forestall decisive response to any new Soviet initiative.

6. Best of all, for the Soviets, is the damage to one of their perennial targets: US Intelligence. Here they have been rewarded with two important advantages. Discovery and identification of the missile bases, and their consequent removal, has somehow been turned into a proof of incompetence, and the public impression that American Intelligence is inefficient and unreliable will persist to the Soviet advantage for years to come. More important, US Intelligence was goaded into revealing so much about its workings, from initial collection through analysis to the part it played in policy decisions, that the Soviets will know exactly what mistakes to avoid in the future. They may even seize on the obvious opportunity to enmesh the whole American intelligence effort in hopeless confusion with what they call "disinformation."

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must already be enjoying such a claim as that there are from 100 to 200 missiles still in Cuba, with all that such talk contributes to American public disquiet and degradation of confidence in the US Government. And they probably geared their promise to withdraw "several thousand" troops to the repeatedly published estimate of 17,000 supposed to be there, knowing that after the withdrawal the intelligence communist would be no less disturbed and divided over the function of those who remained.

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8. These considerations do not add up to a course of action independent of other moves. They are suggested as ancillary to any other steps the Soviets may take, and they would play a part in any of the courses of action discussed below.

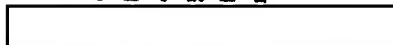
(NOTE: An appendix is being prepared setting for the compromise of a range of US Intelligence sources and methods and to what uses the Soviets and Cubans may put this information.)

9. Reduction in Force and Transfer of Weapons Systems.

Withdrawal of "several thousand" personnel proves nothing about Soviet intentions, especially since it is not clear when the decision to withdraw them was made, but it holds out several possibilities of new dangers. One is that the Soviets are indeed planning to turn over control of the remaining weapons systems to the Cubans. There is some evidence, a good part of it Cuban boasting on various occasions since the big parade of 2 January, that Cubans are being trained in at least some aspects of the operation of the SAM system. There is no evidence that any weapons are being removed along with the troops. Thus we can hypothesize a situation in which the Russians take care that we learn of their troop withdrawal and transfer of weapons. They could

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then announce that "full compliance" with the agreements between Chairman Khrushchev and President Kennedy had been completed, and that responsibility for the defense of Cuba was now entirely in Castro's hands, although the Soviets as good friends of Cuba would always be ready to come to the aid of Cuba if it were attacked. Khrushchev might make a personal appeal to the President to affirm a pledge against invasion, and then go to the UN to seek a resolution against the violation of a nation's sovereignty by surveillance overflights.

10. Having disavowed responsibility, Khrushchev would be free to choose his own response when, eventually, Castro succeeded in knocking down an American plane. He would count on much of the rest of the world to side with the underdog Castro, as it could not when our antagonist in Cuba was the Soviet Union; the mere passage of time makes American preoccupation with a threat from Cuba less and less intelligible to other nations, including the Latin Americans. Thus strong American reaction to Cuban defense of its sovereignty would be played up as bullying imperialism. The Soviets might lose Cuba in the process, but they might see compensating gains around the world.

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11. It is also possible, given an increase in control of military power and the withdrawal of Soviet restraints, that Castro would move against Guantanamo. The Soviets would probably counsel Castro against this or other desperate ventures, with warnings of American retaliation and Soviet reluctance to intervene in a crisis of his making, but they would probably not expect him to show great prudence. In any case they could still disown responsibility and put American "imperialism" in the wrong.

12. Reintroduction of Strategic Weapons. Conspicuous withdrawal and evidence of transfer of control of weapons systems could also mask the covert reintroduction of strategic weapons. Instead of being "once bitten twice shy" the Soviets may begin to reflect on how close they came to succeeding in 1962. This would not seem sensible to us, but then neither did the original operation. At any rate the Soviets could take advantage of the lessons they have learned about American politics, policy, and intelligence. In

Much of the work precedent to reintroduction will already have been

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done -- e.g. surveying of sites, preparation of roads and bridges, preparation of underground and warehouse storage -- and there is probably a great deal of essential equipment still in Cuba. Their capability for concealment and deception would probably be many times greater than it was in the summer and autumn of 1962, and they would be aware of the necessity for maximum precautions.

13. One of their means of covering the great quantity of tonnage which would still need to be brought in could be the announcement of a large industrial program for Cuba. On a second try the Soviets might concentrate their buildup on the relatively mobile MRBMs (less fully assembled than last time, on the grounds that loss of accuracy from local assembly would be compensated for by the chance to introduce larger numbers in greater secrecy).

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In either case it seems that another time they would seek to emplace a larger total number of missiles, trying actually to persuade us that the gap between their delivery capability and ours had been closed.

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14. Presumably the Soviet purpose in a second try at deploying strategic weapons in Cuba would be, as before, not to attain the capability for a preemptive first strike but to force the US to make humiliating concessions which would have the effect of altering the balance of forces. Having had the experience of challenging the US directly in Cuba and found it ready to accept the challenge, the Soviet strategists might try another time to confront the US with a more ambiguous situation, such as that spelled out in the next possible course of action.

15. Linking the Cuban Situation with Another Crisis Elsewhere.

One disadvantage the Soviets suffered last fall was that the American government was able to give its full attention to the only crucial situation confronting it. Now it would make sense for the Soviets to abandon their historic preference for one crisis at a time, and deliberately create one in order to link some other area with Cuba. They seemed about to do this with respect to Berlin in their note on Cuba early in September, and they may now feel that

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While US attention is still focused upon Cuba, the time is propitious for the Soviets to create a crisis elsewhere to which they could quickly link their confrontation with the US over Cuba.

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16. One likely candidate for the scene of such a new crisis is Indonesia. Soviet bases for strategic weapons there would be a relatively quick, cheap, and conspicuous means of reasserting their power upon the world scene. The US would be divided as to whether its vital interests were threatened; its response would be more dilatory and less likely to change the situation in Southeast Asia than previously in the Western Hemisphere. Allies would also be divided: Australia, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, the other SEATO powers, and the US would find the national interest affected to different degrees and in different ways. Soviet strategic missiles in Indonesia would serve little military purpose, but the effect on power politics would be enormous. By the time the world woke up to the seriousness of the Soviet threat to a whole new quarter of the globe, the Soviets would be able to play off Indonesia against Cuba, with some hope of winning concessions in both, but with high expectation of advances in one or the other. These hopes with respect to Cuba would include an ironclad US guarantee not to invade, cessation of overflights, possibly even abandonment of Guantanamo -- at any rate enough to underwrite the continuance of the Soviets,

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communism, and Castro in the Western Hemisphere. All the stops would be pulled: Soviet defense of a struggling new country against the old colonialist imperial powers, Castro's five points aired in the UN against Yankee imperialism and violation of small-nation sovereignty, etc., but in such a way as to link the two areas of crisis, and any solution to the two crises, closely together.

17. Another candidate is Vietnam. The Soviets might count on American frustration over the drawn-out war, division of councils as to a solution, and the rough approximation of American interests in Vietnam with Soviet interests in Cuba to provide an advantageous link. They might propose to withdraw all their troops from Cuba if we withdraw all ours (by then perhaps roughly the same number) from Vietnam, with consequent advantages for Ho Chi Minh and possibly (with the Soviets no longer threatening the US from the Caribbean) for Castro. By itself this would not be an attractive trade for the Soviets, but if it secured North Vietnam's allegiance to the Soviets as against the Chinese, further disrupted Western interests in Southeast Asia, and mollified the Chinese by getting the Americans out of the area, it would take on more advantageous aspects.

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18. A third candidate is always Berlin. Here the disadvantages to the Soviets are greatest, since American determination with respect to Berlin has been as forcefully stated as in the case of Cuba. But here the stakes are also highest, and the Soviets are locally the strongest. There are so many ways of starting, controlling, and turning off crises in Berlin that the Soviets might expect to be able to control the situation as they have repeatedly since 1946. The objective would be to make small Soviet concessions in one crisis produce large American concessions in the other.

19. The next crisis might also start in Cuba itself, and be provoked by shooting down an American plane, by openly delivering strategic weapons to Cuba, or by allowing Castro to deliver an ultimatum demanding US withdrawal from Guantánamo. Wherever it started, the Soviets would expect to control the timing and growth of tensions, and at a suitable moment propose a large package settlement of the two linked crises on their own terms. Whatever else they may have learned last fall, they are not likely to be caught again without preparations for strong counterdemands and alternative courses to guard against the necessity for unilateral retreat.

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20. Establishment of a Submarine Base in Cuba. This maneuver might be made primarily for the military advantages which a submarine base would provide, or it might be made in connection with other strategic plans such as those discussed above. There are various possibilities for using Cuba to extend the range of Soviet submarines into the Gulf of Mexico, where US antisubmarine capabilities are relatively undeveloped, and to extend their time on station in the waters of the Western Hemisphere. One system would be simply to base refueling and supply ships in Cuba which could rendezvous with Soviet submarines at sea. Another would be to use Cuban marine facilities for refueling and simple repairs and refitting. This could develop into the establishment of sophisticated repair facilities, pens, and drydocks capable of the full range of requirements of submarine maintenance. Aside from the obvious military advantages of a submarine base in Cuba, such a base could be used to provoke a US reaction in connection with some other confrontation between Soviet and US interests.

21. Division of Subversive Labor. The Soviets are having trouble controlling Cuba's Maximum Leader: Soviet

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percheron and Cuban mustang do not work well in harness. It would make sense for them to agree on a division of labor in the subversion of Latin America. In some countries Castro's exhortation to violent revolution is the great threat, in others the Soviets and the orthodox local Communist parties can better use more subtle methods. Why not then divide Latin America into spheres of influence? Castro would have to agree to keep hands off countries like Chile, where the local Communists have a good chance to come to power legally, and Brazil, which the Soviets may hope to subvert with rubles. In return Castro would concentrate on the countries which are susceptible to his brand of revolution, beginning with Venezuela but later including Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and others around the Caribbean. He would also set himself up as the liberator of those remnants of colonialism such as British Guiana and Surinam, where his influence upon leaders like Jagan is already strong.

22. Canalizing Castro's energies would have several advantages. Castro would expect a Venezuelan revolution to have a domino effect, and the Soviets would probably agree that concentrating on one revolution would have better chances

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than indiscriminate preaching of violent revolution to all Latin America. Venezuelan oil might both help Castro's internal economic difficulties, easing the burden on the Soviets, and provide Communist income from sales to other Latin American countries. Castro's preoccupation with an adventure abroad might make it easier for the old-line Muscovite Communists in Cuba to strengthen their precarious hold on internal Cuban affairs. The orthodox Communists of Latin America, Luis Prestes for example, would breathe easier. The Chinese would be somewhat mollified by signs that the Soviets were helping a Castroite revolution in a new access of Marxist-Leninist fervor; but the dangerous influence of the Chinese among Latin revolutionaries would lose ground to that of the Soviets in most countries. And even if Castro failed, it would be easier to replace Fidel and Fidelismo with a more disciplined regime made in Moscow.

23. Thus there are a number of alternative courses of action which the Soviets are physically, economically, and diplomatically capable of undertaking. The brief discussion above hardly evaluates the likelihood of each; such evaluation will require much further discussion, since it can no longer

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be assumed that Soviet policy is invariably based upon correct appraisal of Soviet interest, US reaction, and the effective balance of power around the world.

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National Estimates

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